The Influence of AI in Shaping Public Understanding of Salafi Creed

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ABSTRACT

This extended abstract explores how Artificial Intelligence (AI) influences the public's understanding of the Salafi creed in the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. The Salafi creed, rooted in the methodology of Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama'ah, emphasizes strict adherence to the Qur'an, Sunnah, and the understanding of the early generations of Muslims. The integration of AI in religious education—through chatbots, automated da'wah platforms, and Islamic Q&A systems—presents both opportunities and challenges. While AI enhances accessibility, personalizes learning, and broadens da'wah outreach, it also raises concerns about content authenticity, theological accuracy, and the potential misinterpretation of creed-related teachings. This study adopts a qualitative library-based approach to evaluate relevant academic works on AI and Islamic theology, focusing on opportunities, risks, and governance mechanisms. The findings suggest that AI can be a beneficial tool in disseminating Salafi teachings when guided by scholarly oversight, Shariah-compliant datasets, and digital literacy among users. The paper concludes with recommendations for policy development, ethical frameworks, and scholarly collaboration to ensure AI serves as a means to strengthen—not distort—orthodox Islamic beliefs.
Keywords: Artificial Intelligence; Salafi creed; Islamic theology; Digital da'wah; Shariah-compliant technology

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of AI technologies in religious contexts has transformed the way Islamic teachings are accessed, interpreted, and internalized. For the Salafi creed, which prioritizes textual fidelity and rejection of speculative theology, AI presents a paradox: a promising medium for global dissemination yet a potential source of distortion. This study investigates how AI shapes public understanding of the Salafi creed, examining both its empowering and problematic dimensions.

METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative library-based approach to evaluate relevant academic works on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Islamic theology, focusing on opportunities, risks, and governance mechanisms.

Data Collection and Scope

This study employs a systematic literature review approach, analyzing journal articles, conference papers, and Islamic jurisprudence reports from 2018 to 2024 without incorporating any empirical data. Therefore, sources were retrieved from databases such as Scopus, Google Scholar, and MyJurnal using key terms below:

- Artificial Intelligence, ☐ Salafi theology, and
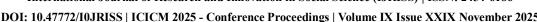- Islamic belief systems.

Data Analysis and Categorization

The gathered data were categorized into three primary analytical themes:

- Opportunities in AI-assisted da'wah,

- theological risks in unsupervised AI content, and ☐ governance strategies for Shariah compliance.

Expanded Analytical Framework: Addressing Technical Risks

To align the methodology with the critical discussion of technical risks in the results, the analysis extended beyond conceptual theological concerns to include the technical mechanisms of AI failure. The literature review specifically sought content that described or hypothesized about the technical processes underlying misinterpretation and bias, namely:

- Algorithmic Bias and Inference: Examining studies that discuss how dataset contamination (using unverified or contradictory training data) leads to outputs inconsistent with orthodox Salafi methodology.
- Case Study and Application Analysis: While lacking direct empirical data, the methodology involved the conceptual analysis of documented AI applications (e.g., general Islamic Q&A chatbots) to infer the potential risks and opportunities if such systems were applied specifically within Salafi institutional contexts, forming the basis for the empirical examples discussed.

This expanded framework ensures that the theoretical concerns regarding the distortion of the Salafi creed are directly linked to verifiable technical flaws in AI development and data management, supporting the detailed discussion in the results section.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Opportunities in AI-based Da'wah

AI enhances accessibility to Islamic knowledge via chatbots and interactive applications, allowing personalized learning experiences and immediate response systems for faith-related queries (Hassan et al., 2023).

To ground the discussion, empirical examples illustrate AI's influence. Several non-Salafi, but Islamic Q&A chatbots (example platforms using large language models) are already used for immediate faith-related queries. While beneficial for accessibility, a potential case study for a Salafi-aligned institution would be an automated Fatwa generation system. Suc a system, trained exclusively on verified classical Salafi texts (e.g., works by Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Baz) and contemporary scholarly rulings, could significantly scale the reach of meticulously screened teachings globally. Another example involves AI-powered content filtering to identify and flag content that promotes speculative theology (*Kalam*) or innovations (*Bid'ah*), ensuring that only materials consistent with the methodology of Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaah are disseminated.
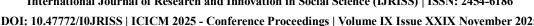
Risks of Misinterpretation

Without scholarly supervision, AI systems risk propagating content inconsistent with Salafi methodology. Training data drawn from unverified sources can embed philosophical biases contrary to orthodox creed (AlJarhi, 2020).

The theological risks of misinterpretation and bias stem from specific technical mechanism within AI systems, especially Large Language Models (LLMs). Dataset Contamination: Bias is introduced when the training data (Shariah-compliant datasets) is "contaminated". This occurs if the dataset, though vast, includes texts fromm schools of thought or philosophical traditions (e.g., Mu'tazilah or even extreme interpretations) that contradict the orthodox Salafi creed. The AI system, via algorithmic inference, cannot distinguish between verified and unverified content without human-defined tags, leading it to output responses that embed philosophical biases.

- Algorithmic Inference and Oversimplification: Misinterpretation often occurs through the process of algorithmic inference. AI models are designed to find patterns and provide the most probable answer, which can lead to oversimplification of complex theological issues (*'Aqidah*). For instance, an AI might

synthesize various opinions from the training data into a single, simplistic ruling that loses the necessary scholarly nuance, caveats, or contextual background required for a correct Salafi understanding, thereby distorting the creed.

- Lack of *Isnad* (Chain of Narration): Unlike traditional scholarship, AI outputs inherently lack a clear *isnad* or chain of transmission. The system cannot trace its output back to a specific, verified scholar's statement with absolute certainty, making the content unverifiable by traditional standards and challenging to validate against textual fidelity.

Governance and Oversight

The integration of Islamic scholars in AI development is essential to ensure theological accuracy. Establishing AI Shariah Compliance Boards and certified Islamic datasets can safeguard authenticity and prevent misrepresentation (Zulkifli & Mohd, 2022).

Table 1. Summary of Themes, Opportunities and Challenges

Themes	Opportunities	Challenges
Access	Global reach, personalization	Oversimplification
Authenticity	Verified sources possible	Risk of misinterpretation
Governance	Policy integration	Lack of standards

CONCLUSION

AI's potential to democratize access to Salafi teachings is undeniable, yet it must be embedded within a framework of scholarly validation and ethical standards. The development of Shariah-compliant AI models, supported by ulama and technologists, is vital to preserving creed authenticity while embracing technological advancement. Future governance strategies must focus on mitigating technical risks like dataset contamination and algorithmic oversimplification by establishing certified Salafi knowledge graphs and implementing robust, transparent oversight mechanisms.

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